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AUTHOR Matthews, Marian K.
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ABSTRACT

This descriptive study looked at the provision of differentiated language arts instruction for gifted students by means of whole language instruction approaches in regular classes. Two classrooms in each of two elementary schools were identified as exemplary whole language classrooms and each contained several students identified for school gifted programs. One classroom in each of grades 1, 2, 4, and 5 was represented. Participant observation was conducted at least once per week for approximately a semester. Additionally, interviews with the classroom teachers, the principals, the reading/language arts coordinators, the teachers of the gifted, and the targeted students were conducted. The benefits of the whole language approach for these students were analyzed in terms of: student choice of reading materials, responses to reading, and writing projects; use of time; social interaction; and appropriate teaching. Analysis indicated: all teachers and classrooms provided examples of some exemplary practices but none provided all those components advocated by either whole language experts or educators of the gifted; the classroom that provided the most exemplary whole language practices also provided the most differentiation of learning experiences for gifted students; and both students and teachers had difficulty articulating what appropriate challenges and differentiated language experience meant to them. It is concluded that, although whole language instruction is a positive approach, it does not preclude the need for differentiated gifted programming. (Contains 28 references.) (DB)

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GIFTED STUDENTS AND WHOLE LANGUAGE:

A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF FOUR CLASSROOMS

Marian K. Matthews, Ph.D.
Eastern New Mexico University
School of Education, Station #25
Portales, NM 88130
(505) 562-2219

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GIFTED STUDENTS AND WHOLE LANGUAGE: A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF FOUR CLASSROOMS

Introduction

Experts in the field of gifted education advocate a differentiated curriculum for gifted and talented students and have described the focus of such differentiated instruction (Keating, 1976; Marland, 1971; Passow, 1982; Van Tassel-Baska; Ward, 1980). Gifted and talented students ordinarily spend the majority of their time in the regular classroom even if gifted programs are available in the schools. Differentiated instruction or modification of the curriculum should necessarily be occurring in the context of the regular classroom, as well as in the gifted program, since such students do not leave their talents at the classroom door. Little research, however, has documented just what happens to gifted and talented students in the regular classroom. As Robinson (1986) has said with respect to recommendations for modification of the regular curriculum for gifted students, "[They] must presently rely on face validity, experience, anecdotal evidence, and in some cases uncontrolled program evaluations" (p. 179). Few recommendations have been tested or studied directly. It was for this reason that the present study was undertaken.

Literature Review

Traditional skill-based approaches to teaching reading and language arts have been viewed unfavorably by those who work with gifted and talented students (Anderson, Tollefson, & Gilberts, 1985; Baskin & Harris, 1980; Brown & Rogan, 1983; Ganopole, 1988; Martin, 1984; Pennington, 1984; Reis & Renzulli, 1989; Robinson, 1986; Savage, 1983; Witty, 1971). What has been described as whole language seems to offer an approach to teaching reading and writing (and, indeed, all content) that might be appropriate for gifted students in the regular classroom. Whole language advocates believe that teachers who profess this theory or philosophy of learning have made a major shift (or paradigm change) in thinking about how learning takes place. Monson & Pahl (1991) have characterized this paradigm shift as one "from *transmission*--teachers transmitting knowledge to students--to *transaction*--students engaging in a transaction between what is known and what is unknown" (p. 51). Thus, rather than teachers being at the center of learning, students become the focal point. Watson (1989) believes that whole language educators have at the center of their interest "whole learners (with all their strengths and needs) who, when given real and continuous opportunities in safe and natural environments, can initiate learning,

generate curriculum, direct their own behavior, and evaluate their own efforts" (p. 133).

Descriptions of whole language classrooms in the literature seem to indicate strong connections between whole language and what has been recommended as differentiated instruction for gifted students. Whole language, as described by its advocates, allows for student interests (Altwerger, Edelsky & Flores, 1987; Ganapole, 1988; Goodman, 1978; Y. Goodman, 1989; Watson, 1989). Indeed it seems as if this interest must be at the center of instruction. Freedom of choice in reading, choosing topics and purposes for writing, flexibility in pacing and complexity of content in both reading and writing, awareness of student needs, allowance and encouragement of of appropriate responses to student work (by both peers and teachers) have all been mentioned in descriptions of whole language programs.

Recommendations for differentiation for the gifted in the language arts include such things as: individualized and self-selected reading, writing, and dramatic experiences; time and opportunity to pursue self-selected research projects that result in real products for real audiences; appropriate teacher and peer interaction to student responses (whether it be higher-level questions and responses in discussion or to student writing, work with mentors, or guided study of literature in areas of interest); and the teaching of appropriate process skills to encourage students to understand self, be able to work with others effectively, and accomplish tasks they wish to undertake (whether it be to create a play, write a poem, tell a story, or pursue some type of research project) (Dole & Adams, 1983; Reis & Renzulli, 1989; Robinson, 1986). When examining the descriptions of whole language classrooms and the recommendations for differentiated language arts instruction for gifted students, many connections can be seen.

Methodology

This study was devised to examine those connections and to determine if whole language classrooms did, indeed, provide differentiated instructional experiences for gifted students in language arts and reading. An ethnographic study of four classrooms identified as exemplary examples of the whole language approach to teaching was completed. Qualitative and naturalistic methods of research have been identified by whole language advocates as particularly appropriate for the study of whole language as they fit whole language's goals, assumptions, and values (Edelsky, 1990; K. Goodman, 1989). Purposive sampling was used to identify the four classrooms in two diverse sites to provide for maximum variation. The research sites were two

elementary schools, one in a predominately white middle-class rural area and the other in a multi-ethnic lower-socio-economic class area in a medium-sized town. These two sites were chosen to demonstrate how whole language practices might work in different settings: in this case with a middle-class white rural population as well as in a working-class multi-ethnic urban population. The schools were identified as whole language schools by university professors who are experts in whole language education.

One of the site schools is a grade four through eight elementary school; one of two schools in this small rural New England community. The other school is a primary school which includes kindergarten through grade three and is located about three miles away. After eighth grade the students are bussed to high schools in neighboring communities. The school has an enrollment of about 300 students with one principal. The superintendent's office is located in the building and the community library is part of the school library. The largely middle-class community in which the school is located is adjacent to a large state university and many teachers and workers at the college live in the area.

The other site school is one of four elementary schools in a medium-sized New England town with a population of approximately 15,000. The town has, in addition, one middle and one high school. The school serves students in grades one through five, drawn generally from economically depressed working class areas, which contain a large number of Puerto Rican, African-American, as well as Caucasian families. The school has approximately 350 students with one full-time principal. Each of the schools has a gifted program; the rural school with a full-time teacher of the gifted, the urban with a half-time teacher of the gifted.

The classrooms were identified as exemplary whole language classrooms by the reading/language arts coordinators in the schools and this identification was confirmed by the principals and the teachers themselves. Several students from each of the classrooms were identified for the gifted programs in their schools. I briefly and informally interviewed the reading/language arts coordinators in the schools for their views on whole language before the identification of appropriate classrooms took place. They indicated a belief in whole language practices and in fact were the instigators of the change of these schools to this approach to learning. They facilitated access to the schools for this study and provided the means for me to gain entry into the classrooms identified as exemplary and then served as key informants on whole language

as it works in these schools. A fourth and fifth grade classroom were identified for me to visit in the rural setting and a first and second grade classroom in the urban setting.

The fourth grade classroom observed in the first site was taught by a man in his late 30's, who is a veteran teacher. There were 17 students in this classroom: seven boys and ten girls. Only one minority student was in either of the classes in this school, one African-American boy in the fourth grade room. All the students, by their dress and hair styles seemed to have similar backgrounds. The fifth grade teacher was in her early 40's and an equally experienced teacher. Her class had 15 students, ten boys and five girls. The children in this class dressed very much like the fourth graders and seemed similar in class status.

The first grade class in the second site was also taught by an experienced teacher in her early 50's. Her class contained 23 students, 12 boys and 11 girls. Two of the boys (both Hispanic) were out of the room for the majority of the day for special education help. The class had five Hispanic students, three boys and two girls. Some of the students in this class dressed in a similar way to the students in the first site, but about half the students wore older clothes. The second grade teacher in site two is an experienced teacher in her late 30's. She had 21 students in her class, 13 boys and 8 girls. Two of the boys were Hispanic and one was African-American. One Hispanic girl was a part of the classroom for about two weeks during the study. The students in this class dressed similarly to the first graders with a little over a third of the students dressing in older and less expensive clothes than the others.

Although the four teachers all identified themselves as whole language teachers, their approaches varied considerably. This variation of approach, the variation in grade level, and the variation in cultural and economic background of the students added appreciably to the depth of the study.

Participant observation was the major data-gathering technique. The observation was conducted in each of the four classrooms at least once per week for approximately a semester during the spring, until data saturation was reached. Data saturation occurs when the information yielded has become redundant and does not offer useful reinforcement of information previously collected (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). Additional whole day observations were conducted in the primary classrooms as their schedules were not as fixed as those in the upper grades, and language arts/reading activities went on throughout the school day. At the end of the observation period

three consecutive full-day observations were also conducted in the primary classrooms in order to gain some understanding of how the whole language practices worked across classes. Field notes recorded during the observations were as detailed and concrete as possible, to keep inferences to a low level.

Additionally, in-depth, open-ended interviews were conducted with the classroom teachers observed, the principals of the two schools, the reading/language arts coordinators, the teachers of the gifted, and five to six targeted students from each classroom. The targeted students interviewed included both average students and those students that gifted program personnel and/or classroom teachers identified as gifted. The unstructured interviews consisted of open-ended questions with probes of participants' statements. "Grand tour questions" (Spradley, 1979, p. 86), such as, "Can you tell me about reading?; Can you tell me about writing?; or Can you tell me about the reading/language arts program?" were the first questions asked and other questions emerged from the responses in order to obtain a more in-depth understanding of participants' views. Similar questions were asked of each participant, to obtain the particular viewpoint of each on the issues raised by the study. The interviews were taped and transcribed.

During the course of the study, several kinds of teacher and student documents were reviewed. Such documents included tests, reading response and daily journals, fiction and non-fiction writings, reports, curriculum guides, etc. It was primarily through the documents the students produced that evidence for differentiation was able to emerge (as well as evidence of gifted behaviors on the part of the students). They also provided evidence for recommended practices and support for practices the teachers may have been unsure about. The students' writings showed most clearly how they should be taught. This aspect will be described in greater detail later.

By interviewing teachers, students, and other participants and reviewing these primary documents, a clearer picture of what each participant believed was happening emerged allowing each person to tell his/her side of the story. The triangulation of data in this study through observation, interview, and document review is a crucially important part of naturalistic studies: each piece of information must be validated by other sources or methods in order to provide a check on the reliability of sources (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Field notes, transcriptions of the interviews, copied documents and notes on documents

were coded and analyzed for themes, patterns, and topics. The coding process emphasized inductive analysis and was used to promote access to the participants' own words and to what actually happened in the classrooms. The data were coded according to "units" (a unit as described by Lincoln & Guba, 1985, has two characteristics--it is heuristic and the smallest bit of information that can stand on its own) on the margins of the transcriptions. These units of analysis were written on notecards and then categorization was attempted. As more data was gathered the categorization changed and was refined. When all data collection was completed, the categorization was finalized and folders of each category created, into which the data units were collected. After copying all the transcripts, the copies were cut into the defined units and placed into the folders so that access to the participants words' and actions in the writing of the study was thus facilitated.

The topics that emerged from the study that had relevance for analyzing the benefits of the whole language approach for gifted students were choice, time, social interaction, and appropriate teaching. Please see Table 1 for a chart of these topics across each classroom studied. I will then discuss each of the topics in detail in the findings section of this paper.

[Insert Table 1 about here.]

Key to table symbols (capital letters denote significant amounts, lower-case letters denote very little amounts and these will be described in more detail in the body of the paper):

fc=free choice	w/par=within parameters	t=teacher
a=assigned	sig=significant	s=student
fact=factual questions	HOTS=higher order thinking questions	
open=open-ended questions	closed=closed-ended questions	
not enc=not encouraged	CM=community member	

In order to understand the table more clearly, read across from left to right. Students in the four classrooms observed had a mixed variety of choices in both reading and writing. They could have a choice of reading materials (such as fiction and/or nonfiction books or magazines), choosing the titles on their own, with help, or within certain parameters, or having assigned books or stories. The students had choices in ways to respond to reading that could include writing, drawing, and/or dramatics. They also had choices in writing that could involve the selection of topics to write about, the selection of the pieces they wanted to publish, and/or the types of writing to do. The students also had varying amounts of time provided to complete individual and

Table 1: Topics Related to Whole Langauge Emerging from Study How They Are Used in the Study Classrooms

TOPIC			1 Grade 1	2 Grade 2	3 Grade 3	4 Grade 5
STUDENT CHOICE	Selection of reading materials		fc a	fc a	FC a	FC a
	Response to reading	writing	fc a	A	fc A	FC a
		drawing	fc	fc A	fc a	fc a
		dramatics	None	fc	None	fc a
	Writing	selection of topics	FC a	fc A	w/par A	FC a
		selection of pieces to publish	A	A	fc A	FC a
		type of writing to do	FC A	fc A	w/par A	FC a
TIME	Reading	individual	Little	Little	Sig.	Sig.
		assigned	Little	Little	Sig.	Sig.
	Writing	individual	Some	Little	None	Sig.
		assigned	Some	Some	Time Limits	Long Times
SOCIAL INTERACTION	Reading	one-to-one	Little	Not enc.	Yes	Yes
		small group	t	No	T / S	T
		large group	Fact / Open	Fact / Closed	Hots / Closed	Hots/Open / Closed
	Writing	student-student	Yes	Not enc.	Yes	Yes
		teacher-student	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
		whole class sharing	Yes	Yes	No	No
APPROPRIATE TEACHING	Modeling	Reading: silently	No	No	Home	Class / Home
		Reading: orally	S / T	T	No T / CM	S / T
		Writing: with students	No	Yes	No	No
		Writing: for students	Yes	Y	No	No
	Response	Knowing readiness	Yes	No	No	Little
		Extending learning	Little	Little	No	Little
		Creating climate	Yes	No	No	Yes
		Accommodating learning styles	Yes	Some	Yes	Yes

assigned reading and writing. Diverse types of interaction occurred between and among students as well as between student(s) and teacher in one-to-one, small group, and large group situations. Different teaching strategies were identified, which included modeling of reading and writing with and for students and response to student learning through knowing readiness, extending learning, creating an appropriate climate for student learning, and accommodating diverse learning styles. I will discuss these findings in more detail below.

Discussion of Findings

Topic 1: STUDENT CHOICE.

Selection of reading materials.

Students in the first classroom (Grade 1) had a minimal amount of both free choice and assigned reading materials. In the second classroom (Grade 2), the same thing occurred--minimal amounts of both free choice and assigned reading materials. In the third classroom (Grade 4), the students had a significant amount of free choice in the selection of their reading materials and less assigned material. This was also the case in the fourth classroom (Grade 5).

A partial description of what went on in these classrooms is provided to make these events clearer. In the fourth and fifth grade classrooms, the students were allowed complete freedom of choice of reading materials during their SSR (sustained silent reading) times. These SSR times were quite lengthy, extending from fifteen to thirty minutes a day (most often the latter). The students read novels a majority of the time. During the formal "reading" times, students were allowed a choice of reading materials within certain parameters. The teacher would usually present three novels per unit of prescribed reading time (lasting anywhere from a week to a month or more), describing them in detail to the students, from which they could pick one book to read. In each of these two classes, provisions were also made for students to reject a book after they had begun reading. Students read on their own during their assigned reading (and language arts or writing) times, which could extend from 15 minutes to two hours a day. Thus, extensive reading in books the students had chosen (within some parameters) was occurring in each of the fourth and fifth grade classrooms.

In the first and second grade classrooms, the students had free reading times, usually after lunch for about 10 to 15 minutes, but little real interest in reading was observed in the students in these classrooms. They expressed little interest in reading or books and, in contrast to the students

in the fourth and fifth grades, they seldom picked up books during other times when they had finished their work. They were given no choice in reading material during their formal "reading" times. In the first grade class, different books were chosen by the teacher for the three different reading groups she had. In the second grade classroom, reading was carried out through whole class instruction, both through the morning message (a message written to the students by the teacher on the chalkboard every day) and through various books the teacher chose for the students to read. The teacher either read the books aloud, or, if not, the better readers were told to read to the students who could not read the material. In each of these classrooms, the time actually spent reading was limited. A total of about 5 to 10 minutes were spent in reading on the part of the students and perhaps 10 to 15 minutes were spent by the teacher reading aloud.

Response to reading.

Students had a variety of choices in types of responses they could make to the reading that they did. As can be seen by Table 1, there was little free choice allowed to the students except in the case of the fifth grade, where students had a significant amount of free choice in the writing of response journals. In both the fourth and fifth grade classrooms, students kept reading response journals. The fourth grade teacher assigned many of the responses in the journals his students kept. An example of such a response is the following assignment after the students read Chapter 3 of *The Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler*, by E. L. Konigsburg:

> The words below are often used when we talk about museums. Use a dictionary to locate and copy the definition of each word (copy the term in your journal): a) tapestry, b) curator, c) masterpiece, d) sarcophagus, e) sculptor, f) urn.

The fifth grade teacher allowed more open and divergent writing in her students' journals, such as personal responses to and opinions on the reading. She directly taught the students how to write personal responses and graded them higher on personal responses than when they made summaries. An example of a student's response to *The Secret Garden* (students' writing through out this paper is presented as they wrote it):

> I feel bad for Mary because she was just like a piece of junk to her Mem Sahib. It is kind of strange that all of the Aha's left Mary in the house alone. I think Mary could be a nice person but she just wants to keep her reputation of being a sour puss and a brat. I think that Mr. Crane is just like Mary, trying to keep his reputation of being a sour puss and a snot. You can tell that she was almost giving up her reputation when the lady was telling her about Mr. Crane and his wife. I think that Mary and Mr. Crane will become good friends.

The first and second grade teachers gave many more assigned responses to their students and some of these would be very familiar to any classroom teacher, such as worksheet type assignments.

Students in all the classes did very little in artistic responses to the reading, generally drawing if they liked in their journals (and this was done much more frequently in the first and second grade classrooms) and sometimes having such assignments as drawing a poster in response to a specific book. Few dramatic responses to the reading were observed: a small play based on one of the stories in the second grade and a scene from a book enacted in the fifth grade, as well as a reader's theater piece developed from a scene in another book in the same classroom.

Writing.

The only significant free choice in writing occurred in the fifth grade classroom. The students in this class kept writing folders and were allowed to write on topics of their choice for as long as they liked (these times ranged from one week to seven months, in one case), to choose which pieces they wanted to be published, and could write in any genre they chose. In their writing folders were a number of pieces that they had taken to final copy. These stories included such titles as: "The Christmas Wish" about a boy whose only wish for Christmas was that his mother stop drinking; "My Dad" about a dad who is very weird and wears bandanas around his head; "The Shortest Person I Know" about a friend who has a weird laugh and the smallest feet of a ten year old person; "The Golden Knight" about a knight who requested a very large payment in order to kill a black dragon named Gratch who has wiped out a whole army; "The Invasion Begins" about aliens invading the earth. This teacher also had certain writing assignments, but even when the students wrote reports (or non-fiction writing), they could choose whatever they liked on which to write.

The second and fourth grade teachers generally assigned most, if not all, of the writing. The fourth grade teacher remarked to me that he gave the students topics because they had no ideas of their own.

The first grade teacher assigned some writing topics but also allowed her students to keep writing journals, in which they wrote anything they liked. Some examples of this type of writing from three different students (student writing presented as written):

I wit slidinge at ram The Sacit to Lost was The Bast tim going Done. But the Lost Tim Wos The Wost! I wit ovr the top and the sled wit one wae and I wit the elr. and I Did a flip in the ere and Landid on my but and that hrt! (I went sliding at Ram. The second to last was the best time going down. But the last time was the worst! I went over the top and the sled went one way and I went the other. *And I did a flip in the air and landed on my butt* and that hurt!)

I am going go on razing my hand.

I Lock macking things up be my silf (I like making things up by myself.)

The students interviewed in these classes commented on their attitude toward writing. Aileen, one of the brightest students in the fourth grade class said, "I don't really like writing because they pick a subject for you. Or they have subjects in the writing corner.... I have been able to pick subjects [in third grade] and I like that better." All of the students interviewed in this class remarked that they did not like to write, whereas most of the students in the fifth grade, where choice in topics was more open, were either very enthusiastic about writing or liked it somewhat.

The first graders were especially enthusiastic about their writing journals. When the teacher in this class told the students that it was journal writing time they usually cheered and went to do the task with smiles on their faces. They talked with each other about what they were writing and drawing and always wanted to share what they had written with others.

When examining the different pieces above, those from the students' journals definitely show the students' engagement with the writing--their interests and emotions are prominently expressed. Chris says he is "going to go on raising his hand," regardless of whether the teacher *ever* calls on him. (A very bright boy, Chris always had his hand in the air to answer questions. He was very seldom called on, however, as the teacher liked to give the slower students a chance to answer.) Sarah tells how she "likes making things up by herself." In these pieces they are speaking with their own voices, not the voice of the teacher. One predetermined response is not required and the children therefore can have the freedom to express themselves in their own individual ways.

Table 1 shows the difference across classes in the student selection versus teacher selection of pieces to publish and types of writing the students were to do. Again, the first and fifth grade teachers allowed more student choice in these areas.

The next major topic that emerged from the study was time. This topic involves the amount of time teachers allowed students to complete both assigned and individual reading and writing. I will discuss the issue of time below.

Topic 2: Time

The literature review suggested that in order for students to be able to do their best work, they need the time and opportunity to pursue self-selected interests. Not all students are the same, what one student can do in 10 minutes, it may take another student an hour to do. If an activity requires thinking, planning, revising, conferring with others, discussion, certainly the activity is one that requires more depth. Such learning requires a more flexible approach to time limits. A 55 minute class period may not allow for this type of learning. A strict restriction on time (saying that something must be completed during the class period, for instance) allows for little thinking, creativity, risk-taking (in that there is no time for mistakes), or the opportunity to pursue some interest in depth.

Reading.

If it is true, as Fielding, Wilson & Anderson (1985) have stated, the more reading children do, the more they gain in reading achievement and if few children choose to read much outside of school, then it becomes necessary to allow time and opportunity for children to read in school.

In the classrooms in this study, time for various projects was somewhat flexible, although this flexibility ranged across classrooms. As discussed above, time for reading was significantly more prolonged in the fourth and fifth grade classrooms than in the first and second grade classrooms. The teachers in the fourth and fifth grade remarked on how much their students liked to read since they had moved to a literature-based approach. The fifth grade teacher said, "This is much more a way of engendering a love for reading in kids. They definitely love to read more. It's, I'm not sure exactly how, but I know it's provable. The kids read more and love to read more and will choose to read more every time."

The students in the fourth and fifth grades read many times during the free times observed in this study. All the students interviewed said they liked to read. A fifth grade student talked about the time for reading, in that there was now more time to read a longer book, whereas before (when they were doing basal reading) they only read "these little short boring stories. It's better because it's like a chapter book that you can get more interested in. [You can get more interested]

in a chapter book than a five page story."

This was not the case in the first and second grade classrooms; the students didn't show as much interest in reading. In these classes, less time was available for sustained reading of books than in the fourth and fifth grade classes. Although the children were allowed reading time, it was fragmented. Of course, these students read shorter books, but I observed one instance where a student in the second grade had a "chapter" book to read and had little time to read it. She could only read parts of chapters and not a whole chapter at a time. A great deal of reading to and with the children took place, but the reading was not sustained for lengthy periods of time. I never saw the children or even one child involved in reading for longer than five minutes.

The children in the first and second grades very seldom chose reading for a free-time activity. When they did pick up books, they flipped through them, quickly chose other books and otherwise showed they were not very engaged with the task. This lack of engagement or lack of interest in reading was apparent even in the good readers. The students did like to read aloud to the teacher, other adults, other students, or the whole class and showed the longest amount of engaged time when they were allowed to do this type of reading.

The students interviewed in these two classes said that they liked to read some and mentioned several ways that they chose books, but said that they did not read much either at school or at home and were not really interested in reading. One of the better readers, a gifted student in the second grade, could not give a reason for reading. When asked why she read or why people in general read, she replied, "I don't know" and could not go on, even when pressed for an answer.

Writing.

Time for writing ranged from a few minutes in the day for one piece to be finished (generally in the first grade) to several hours in one day for one piece to be finished (generally in the second grade). In the fourth grade, the time in the day might last from 15 minutes to one and a half hours. These students generally had no longer than a couple of days to finish one piece although they might get as long as a week. In the fifth grade classroom, writing and reading took place during one long language arts block so they could write for as long as they liked up to about two hours in one day. They could write on their pieces as long as they liked; one student took seven months to finish a piece that was 30 pages long. When students in this class had writing that had to be finished, such as the reports or other assigned topics, the finish time was usually flexible

although the teacher liked to give deadlines because as she said, "With some kids you have to nudge them to come to an end with their rough draft and then make it into a final copy." Most of the students interviewed in this class said that they enjoyed writing.

In the fourth grade classroom, definite time-lines for finishing pieces existed. The students usually had to finish their rough drafts in one day. A student from this class remarked on the effect of this type of deadline: "In third grade they would give you like a week to write your story and now they only give you a half-hour and I can't come up with ideas that fast. My teacher thinks I'm a good writer but I'm not really sure." They were allowed more time to finish final copies and were required to work with other students to correct their copy before taking it to final draft. None of the students interviewed in this class indicated that they liked writing, however.

In the first and second grade classes, time for writing was sometimes very flexible. In the second grade, students periodically had journal writing and the time allowed for this writing could range from 15 to 30 minutes on any given day. Students wrote in their journals at the teacher's direction and this writing might take place every day of a week or just once during the week. It was not a set scheduled activity.

For assigned writing exercises in the second grade, the students often could have as long as it took them to write. During one writing activity the assignment was given on the morning of one day and children continued to write all day, some even wrote part of the next day. They usually had to write continually, though, until they "got it right." It was not something they could put down, think about, and then pick up later in the week.

In the first grade class, the teacher was also flexible about time for doing writing. Journal writing was usually included in one of the daily tasks that the students were to do, although sometimes the teacher would say, "You don't have to write in your journals today since we are doing other writing." The students usually had the option of doing their journals at their own pace, although the teacher often liked them to finish their writing (and other assigned morning tasks) before lunch so that they could share what they had written during the group sharing time that occurred before lunch. If she called on a child to share what they had written in their journal and the child responded that they had not been able to finish or had not written anything because they had not had time, she would usually respond that they could finish or write tomorrow. One time, however, I did observe her tell one of the children in this class, "The reason you didn't have time

to write was because you were talking too much and playing around instead of writing."

When these students had a particular writing assignment, this teacher usually wanted the them to finish on the day it was assigned so that they could share during the whole-class sharing time. When the children came together for this time, normally all but about two to four would be finished. The students who were not finished were allowed to continue writing while the other children shared and then were allowed to come to the group and share as they finished with their pieces. Most of the students interviewed in the first and second grade classes remarked that they liked to write.

Social interaction among the students and the students and teachers was an important adjunct to the learning process in all the classes observed in this study. I will discuss this topic in the next section of the paper.

Topic 3: Social Interaction.

The literature suggests that social interaction is central to learning. Through interaction with others, our thinking is enriched, because we become aware of the points of view of others besides ourselves. Robinson (1986) states that it is through high level interaction with teachers and peers that appropriate differentiation of learning experiences for gifted students takes place. Social interaction was encouraged through various means in all but the second grade classroom.

Reading.

Social interaction in reading was encouraged by discussion on the part of students, either one-to-one, in small groups, or in large groups. The one-to-one discussions were very informal in the first grade classroom, students just talked with each other whenever they wanted to about their books; in the second grade classroom this kind of discussion was actively discouraged. In the fourth and fifth grade classrooms, students were formally encouraged to have discussions with each other after reading each chapter in their books. These discussions were called "Chapter Chats" and in them the students could discuss anything they wanted about the books they were reading. No teacher monitored the discussions.

Small group discussions were conducted by the teachers in the second, fourth and fifth grades on the books that a particular group was reading at the time. There were many of these in both the fourth and fifth grade classrooms, few in the first grade. In the fourth grade, the teacher also asked his students to hold small group discussions by themselves. At first these type of

discussions among the students were quite animated but after the teacher explained that they were only to go around the group giving summaries of the chapters, the students held these "discussions" in a very desultory manner and did not interact with each other at all except to say, "I'm glad we got that over fast."

The teachers in every classroom also held large group or whole class discussions on the books they were reading. The discussions they held were markedly different, though. The first grade teacher generally asked factual types of questions in her discussions, but she allowed a multitude of responses and the question and answer period was very relaxed with an easy give-and-take. The following discussion led to a writing suggestion. The class had the Big Book, *Meanies*, which they had read, discussed and written about the day before. They read the book again and discussed each page as they read it with these kinds of questions: "What do you sleep in? What do you bathe in? What do you drink?" The students all responded, "Ugh!!!" when they talked about Meanies eating old bubble gum. They discussed driving in old baked bean tins for a moment and then the teacher wrote the following on the board: "drink, drive, eat, sleep, wash."

She asked, "What are some other things that happen to Meanies?"

1st student: "They do mean things to other people."

Teacher: "And you wrote about that yesterday." She wrote on the board, "What do Meanies brush their teeth with?"

Some students say, "They don't."

Others respond, "They do."

2nd student: "Hair brushes."

The teacher writes, "Meanies brush their teeth with hair brushes," and says it in the sing-song manner of the book as she writes. They go on with other examples of where Meanies live, what they wear, cover up with, think about, and so on. She tells the students, "We could make our own book of Meanies."

The students were involved in discussions like this one on a regular basis. They called out, waved their hands, and wanted to answer. The teacher always smiled at whatever the students said, encouraged those who did not have their hands up to answer and so on. By their facial expressions and enthusiasm, both students and teacher seemed to like the discussions about the reading.

The second grade teacher also asked very factual types of questions but the answers the students gave were much more limited than those the first graders gave. There didn't seem to be an easy give-and-take with this teacher. An example of a whole-class discussion in the second grade classroom: The teacher had read and discussed two chapters in the book, *Chocolate Fever*, when she came to the last chapter entitled, "The Lesson Learned." She asked, "What do you think this was?" A student answered, "He won't eat so much chocolate." Another one said, "If he has spots, he needs to get it checked out." A third answered, "Don't keep it to yourself, share with others." Several other students responded and then the teacher went on to read the last chapter and asked in relation to whether it was possible for the character to get chocolate fever or another kind of fever again, "What do you think? Would he make that same mistake twice?" The students answered with a chorus of yes's and no's. She said, "Remember he's just a little boy--he may not learn it the first time." A couple of the children said, "I do, I do." [learn the first time] The teacher answered, "I wish you lived at my house." The students enthusiastically responded to questions and seemed happy to respond to whatever the teacher said, although this teacher seemed less enthusiastic during reading discussions.

In the fourth grade, the teacher asked the following types of questions during a whole class discussion of *Bridge to Terabithea* by Katherine Patterson:

> Do you think Jess was a coward? Do you think you might be a coward? What exactly is meant by cowardice? Jess thought he needed a "gut transplant." What does that mean? What does Jess mean by it? How about Leslie? Was she a coward? Why not?

Although the above questions all seem very open-ended, there was little interaction in the discussion with the students. The students would call out answers but the teacher usually did not respond much to their answers. Several times he appeared to have a certain answer in mind and prodded the students to answer his way. An example of a response to a student, "That's not quite it." He also said, "My answer might be one that you are not familiar with, perhaps never having experienced it since it is something that happens after accidents." He then wrote blanks on the board with S at the beginning and then K at the end and then H after the S. Finally one student called out, "shock" which the teacher indicated was the answer he was looking for. All the discussion was carried out in a similar fashion and all future discussions with students were also done in the same way. Although he asked thought provoking questions, he had only one answer

in mind and students had to answer in the way he thought. In this discussion the students were animated, calling out answers and anxious to respond. They waved their arms around so that the teacher would call on them and moved up closer and closer to the front throughout the discussion. The teacher was less animated and did not respond to individual student responses other than saying, "That might be one answer," or as indicated above, "That's not quite it."

The fifth grade teacher also asked thought provoking, as well as factual questions but she was more open to students' ideas and would often probe their answers to find out what they really thought. An example of her questioning while discussing *Homecoming* by Cynthia Voigt, "Have you noticed how Dicey always likes to be near water?" She then read about the children being on the water and said, "Have you noticed how water always seems to make Dicey feel better? I've noticed as I read..." She read about how Dicey likes to move and be still and the group then discussed this idea. A student responded, "I think it means that she likes to move as the water moves the boat but she doesn't have to do anything." Another student said something about this idea also and then the teacher said, "I think this also means that Dicey doesn't have to take care of anything now. She is probably tired of taking care of everything, of being in charge of everything." During this discussion, the teacher and students were both quite animated. All students were interested in the discussion and participated. When the students or teacher read from their books, they read with a great deal of expression. As can be seen from the excerpt, the teacher responded to what the students said and followed up on their comments to some extent.

Writing. (An extensive discussion of this section is presently being prepared for submission to *Language Arts.)*

More interaction occurred with the writing than with the reading in the classrooms observed, although the types of interaction varied across classes. Interaction in writing is defined as conferences held with students about the writing they do. The conferences observed in the classrooms were student to student conferences, teacher-student conferences, and whole-class sharing of a student's writing.

All the students were encouraged to talk to each other about their writing and to help each other except in the second grade. Informal conferences were held in the first grade but in the fourth and fifth grade, conferences were directly supported by the teacher and students were taught how to hold both content and editing conferences. In all the classrooms but the fourth grade,

teachers held conferences with their students about the writing. These conferences were for the purpose of discussions about content and/or about editing for publication.

Only students in the first and second grade shared their work with the whole class and took comments on the work (similar to the idea of an author's chair). In neither of these classes, however, did students then return to their work and revise it according to the comments they had received.

The next topic to be discussed has to do with appropriate teaching strategies in order to meet the diverse needs of children and help them learn. Much has been written on these strategies so I will not discuss them at length, only as they were observed in these classrooms.

Topic 4: Appropriate Teaching.

The literature on whole language and on the gifted has suggested that appropriate teaching is necessary if we are to meet the needs of children. Two ways of teaching, modeling and response, will be examined in this section. Modeling means teaching by example. Response includes how a teacher reacts to a student's perceived needs, both academically and affectively. It is through response that a teacher teaches what a child is ready to learn, extends that learning, creates an appropriate climate for learning, and provides for individual learning styles.

Modeling.

Table 1 shows clearly the kinds of modeling observed or not observed in each of the four classrooms in this study. This modeling ranged across classrooms and types of activities. Modeling in reading consisted of the teacher or another adult reading silently and/or orally with the students and students reading orally to the other students at a specific time set by the teacher. Modeling in writing consisted of teachers writing with and for students.

No teacher was ever observed to read adult books of their choice during the observation period, although the fifth grade teacher read children's books at times during silent reading time. In most discussions of the effectiveness of sustained silent reading time, the suggestion is always made that it is much more effective if the teacher reads with the students. None of the other teachers were observed reading silently in any sort of book during class time, although the first, second, and fifth grade teachers frequently read orally to the children. Both the fourth and fifth grade teachers remarked that they read many children's books at home and they were able to convey their interest in and excitement about the books they had read when they presented books to

the students. In all the classrooms books, or parts of books, were read orally to the students. In the first and fifth grade classrooms, students read orally to the whole class frequently. Only a community member, who came in every Friday, read orally to the fourth grade class.

In writing, only one person, the second grade teacher, was observed to write with the students. She had a journal that she kept sometimes when the students were writing. She also shared her writing with the children three times, but did not ask the class for responses after reading her pieces. Both the first and second grade teachers wrote a "Morning Message" on the chalkboard almost every day for the children to read but it was generally written before the children came into the classroom. The second grade teacher would write little stories on her board to demonstrate something she wanted them to do in their writing. None of the teachers in the study modeled how they picked topics, how they decided on content, how they revised, or edited their own pieces. These activities have been widely encouraged in the literature on writing process instruction.

In the classrooms where reading was observed by the students to be important and interesting to the teacher, the students seemed to enjoy reading. Writing was more problematical as there were few models for the students in writing. If the teachers had provided more models for writing, perhaps more students would have been more enthusiastic about writing.

Response.

A teacher must become aware of what it is that a child knows and doesn't know in order to teach what they are ready to learn. Several types of response have been discussed earlier in this paper. Those responses include teacher to student and student to student interaction in discussion on the reading and conferences that students and teachers hold on the writing done in the classroom. High-level interaction occurred most often in the first and fifth grade classrooms because open-ended responses were allowed the students. In the second and fourth grade classrooms either the teachers only asked factual questions or one answer was required in a higher -level question.

Students regularly kept reading response journals in the fourth and fifth grades but it was only in the fifth grade that real personal responses were allowed in which the teacher might be able to evaluate whether a student had truly understood the point of the story. One young man in that class wrote in his journal, in response to *The Girl Who Owned City:* "I don't like this book much

because it is boring. Kids that walk into houses and take whatever they want is a pretty dumb thing to read about." From this response the teacher was able to gather that this student did not understand that this was a science fiction story about a catastrophe that killed all adults and that in order to survive the kids would have walk into houses and take whatever they needed to survive. This teacher pointed out to me at the beginning of my observation in this classroom a student that she described as verbally gifted. During the course of my observations I never saw this student interact with others in discussions on books, about his writing, in small or large groups or in one-to-one situations. However, when I finally read his reading response journals and his writing folder, I knew she was right. His is the response to *The Secret Garden*, quoted earlier in this paper. He constantly wrote insightful responses to his reading and his stories were outstanding. She had obtained her knowledge of the student's verbal skills through his personal writing.

Student responses to the reading in the other classes were pretty well limited to factual recall of information although some predictions were requested in the second and fourth grades. Students did not respond to each other in their journals and teacher response was limited for the most part to grading the students' work. The fourth grade teacher especially marked up the student journals for misspellings, poor punctuation, and other mistakes. I will discuss teacher response in student journals further in the extending learning section of this paper.

In the first grade class, the teacher knew just exactly where the students were in their writing because she read their journals every day. Some students were drawing elaborate drawings and writing complete and understandable sentences at the beginning of the year; some students were only writing letters that had no relation to the stories they were trying to tell. In their journals she wrote "in adult writing" to the students who had no written words to tell their stories.

The fifth grade teacher also read her students' writing to determine what she needed to teach. She discovered that many students were dividing words inappropriately so she taught a lesson on syllabication and dividing words as a response. The only problem in both cases mentioned above, was that the teachers knew that the students had individual needs but they taught the whole class. The fifth grade teacher, instead of teaching to the small group that was having the problem, taught the entire class. Some students may have already known and applied the rules; some students may not have been ready for the lesson. The first grade teacher, although she knew the vast differences in her students' writing ability, still had whole class lessons on writing, such

the vast differences in her students' writing ability, still had whole class lessons on writing, such as the time she had students write valentine letters to each other. The students who were still just writing random individual letters could not possibly do this without a teacher model. I observed one student copy letter-for-letter the teacher model in order to able to make her valentine.

In the second and fourth grade classrooms, the teachers, because of their almost exclusive dependence on teacher assigned work, had little idea of, or took no account of their students' various stages of readiness. The fourth grade teacher, however, did develop individualized spelling lists for his students based on the mistakes they made in their writing.

Extending Learning.

Few opportunities for extending learning in these four classrooms were observed. Extending learning means to respond to student work in meaningful ways so that the students can build on what they already know, broaden their outlook, and/or provide a check on any misunderstandings they might have.

Few written responses to student writing was seen, other than evaluative responses, such as check's, check -'s, check +'s, with a few written responses to explain why they had gotten those marks. They also wrote such things as "Good work," "Well done," "Good advice," or "If your handwriting doesn't get neater then you'll be copying your work over every day!" If any response was made to the young man's misunderstanding of the *The Girl Who Owned a City*, it was not evident in the student's reading journal.

The fifth grade teacher, however, did make oral and written responses to her students' writing in the report writing they did, while discussing the topics they chose, after webbing, after drafts, and before and after publication. She also responded in some minor ways to their reading journals and to their writing in their writing folders. She was also the only teacher who made any significant responses that extended student learning in discussions. She was also the only one that encouraged student responses to other students that extended their learning. She encouraged students to share their own points of view and understandings with other students. An example of this kind of sharing:

> 1st student read her paper and then said, "So, what should I say next? Is my beginning all right? Is it a proper beginning or should it go in the middle?"
>
> 2nd student: "You should tell what Razor-Fang is like."

1st student: "He's going to die. They're rats like this big." She indicated the size with her hands about two feet apart.

2nd student: "I didn't know. You should introduce more." He went on to say something about not knowing anything about this character until she told him this.

1st student: "Make beginning better?"

2nd student: "Yes."

In the conference above, the second student is able to give specific help to the writer of the story. He has heard the story, there is something he does not understand and he is able to convey this lack of understanding to the writer. She then knew what she needed to do to revise her story and her own learning was extended. The student who provided the help probably now knew something about making better beginnings as well.

What becomes evident from these observations is that we can really only extend students' learning when we have allowed them to tell us what they know and don't know. One-right-answers can't tell us that--we may think that it tells us whether or not they know the facts but it may only be that they have misunderstood the question or felt it was unimportant to answer. In these classes little extension of learning was observed even though the first and fifth grade teachers allowed open-ended responses to the reading and lots of writing in journals and writing folders. These teachers were beginning to make good extensions of the students' learning but could go much further. In discussions, the fourth grade teacher asked a lot of open-ended questions but I could see when I looked at what really went on in the classroom the students were expected to come up with the answers that the teacher had in mind. When only closed-ended responses are expected, and correctness, rather than ideas are encouraged, little extension of learning can be expected to take place.

Creating an appropriate climate for learning.

Different climates for learning were evident in each of the classrooms observed. In the first and fifth grade classrooms observed, the teachers were very accepting of the students and anything they tried. Each of these teachers applauded their students' work and accepted errors as learning experiences. Therefore, the students in both of these classes were more willing to take risks. The students in the fifth grade were encouraged to put on a play based on one of their books which they wrote, made costumes, and acted all on their own. Even though it had not been planned by the

teacher and took up a lot of class time, as well as risked ridicule for the costumes, they enthusiastically performed it for their classmates. They were never afraid to ask questions, to say they didn't know, to share their interests with their classmates or their teacher. The first grade classroom was very similar in feel; students asked questions, talked things over with their classmates, wrote about their feelings in their journals. An example of one journal response from this class:

> Dear Sarah I dot lik Erin Mor Than you I am jost sayin this to you beCus you hrte my fillins at The Luch room (Dear Sarah, I don't like Erin more than you. I am just saying this to you because you hurt my feelings at the lunch room.)

It was also in this room that Chris wrote to his teacher that he was going to go on raising his hand, which might have been risky in a more threatening environment.

Correctness was the mode in the second and fourth grade classroom. The correct way was determined only by the teachers. In the second grade classroom, only the teacher could hold conferences with the children, they were not empowered to help each other. In the fourth grade classroom, the teacher had certain expectations for reading and writing: reading assignment slips every day and in writing certain assigned topics to write on. He said, "The students have no ideas. That is why I give them topics to write on." Everything in this classroom had to be done in certain set ways and patterns, determined ahead by the teacher. One student in this class whose handwriting and spelling were atrocious, told me he felt that he "had no ideas" although he was the student many of the other students went to for ideas about their writing. Three other students I interviewed remarked on the great ideas this student had. His writing was awash in a sea of red because he had such problems with spelling, but the ideas were there. Often even in our own minds we equate the grade on mechanics and spelling with the quality of the ideas. This young man certainly did.

In the second grade classroom, I observed one instance where a student had misunderstood a direction the teacher had given him about his writing; he was to tell what the two words a contraction he had used stood for. He thought he was supposed to use a different verb for the contraction he had used but couldn't think of one. The students around him tried to help him but he wouldn't accept their help, telling them not to look at his paper. I even tried to help him, but he would only accept the word of the teacher on what she wanted. As we can see, risk-taking is discouraged in such a climate.

Accommodating learning styles.

Through the multitude of responses that students could make in their language arts classes, different learning styles were accommodated: reading, writing, artistic expression, discussion alone or in small and large groups were all encouraged in all the classrooms, although the teachers were never observed to give a formal learning styles assessment. The example of the verbally gifted boy mentioned earlier in this paper shows how the fifth grade teacher especially accommodated diverse learning styles. Her students could respond to reading orally through discussion, by writing personal responses, by drawing or painting, or by putting on a play of a scene in the book. They could work alone or in small or large groups. They could do large projects. Writing was done in a similar fashion. All of the classrooms in the study were conducted in such a way to accommodate diverse learning styles.

Summary and Conclusions

As each of these topics were reviewed in terms of the classrooms studied, a complex picture emerged, one that did not lend itself to easy analysis. All the teachers and classrooms studied provided examples of some exemplary practices but none provided all those components advocated by whole language experts or by educators of the gifted. As mentioned in the introduction, experts in the field of gifted education advocate differentiated instructional experiences for gifted students. In the literature review, certain practices in the language arts have been recommended as appropriate differentiation of the curriculum for gifted students. In none of the classrooms in this study was there observed total differentiation of learning experiences for gifted students, although some was observed in all the classrooms. In the classroom that provided the most exemplary whole language practices was observed the most differentiation of learning experiences for gifted students. See Figure 2 for a chart that demonstrates the differentiation students experienced across classes.

[Insert Figure 2 about here.]

No teacher used differentiated language arts strategies with just gifted students: all students were allowed the same opportunities and taught in the same way. This practice is recommended by whole language experts. Responses by the students varied, however, and these varied responses were either encouraged or discouraged by the varying climates in the classrooms.

Table 2: Language Arts Differentiation Components Used in Classrooms in the Study

COMPONENTS IN LANGUAGE ARTS DIFFERENTIATION		1 Grade 1	2 Grade 2	3 Grade 4	4 Grade 5
INDIVIDUALIZED & SELF-SELECTED EXPERIENCES	READING	Little	Little	Little	Some
	WRITING	Some	Some	No	Yes
	DRAMATICS	No	Little	No	Some
TIME AND OPPORTUNITY TO PURSUE SELF-SELECTED RESEARCH PROJECTS		Little	Little	No	Yes
APPROPRIATE TEACHER /PEER INTERACTION TO STUDENT RESPONSES	HIGHER-LEVEL QUESTIONS 1) IN DISCUSSION	Some	No	Yes but response closed	Yes & No
	2) TO STUDENT WRITING	Some S & T	No	No, except for S	Yes S & T
	WORK WITH MENTORS	No	No	No	No
	GUIDED STUDY OF LITERATURE IN AREA OF INTEREST	No	Some	Some	Yes
TEACHING OF APPROPRIATE PROCESS SKILLS	TO UNDERSTAND SELF	No	No	No	Not taught By product
	TO BE ABLE TO WORK WITH OTHERS	Not taught By-product	No	Taught Conf. Skills	Taught Disc. & Conf. Skills
	TO ACCOMPLISH TASKS	Some teacher designed	Some teacher designed	Some teacher designed	Teacher designed & some student interest

Responses by the teacher and the other students to the student responses also varied according to the climate in the classroom and the teaching style of the teacher. Robinson (1986) has said that just because content is good for all students does not negate the fact that it should be used with gifted students. She further stated that it is the response of the child to the content that makes it appropriate rather than anything inherent in the content itself. It is also the response of the teacher and other students to the "gifted response" of the child that makes for differentiation. It is then incumbent on the teacher to make available the opportunities for the child to develop products and performances beyond those generally available in the regular curriculum. The teachers in this study did not actually provide very many opportunities for the students to develop those products and performances.

In the interviews the students talked about liking to read or to write or being bored by a particular book or the kind of writing they had to do, but they had a difficult time commenting on whether these language arts practices offered appropriate challenge and differentiated curricular experience. Tim, the bright fifth grader, however, compared the basal program he was in before to the whole language program provided in his present school:

> [The reading] is not anything like it is here. You didn't really read stories like you do here. I never thought about writing. Reading, writing, spelling and English (or language arts) are a lot the same... [They] all have something to do with getting words, [just] learning words.... I like reading here because you get to read books; I like writing because you get to write stories.

Aaron also commented on a similar theme:

> Well, I think it's better than doing those reading book things, the workbook things. We had to do those like in second and third grade and then they switched it to novels and everything. [Then] you read anywhere from a two to seven page thing. They ask questions and you'd write answers to them on this piece of paper and they were these little short boring stories. It's better cause it's like a chapter book that you can get more interested in than a five page story.

The teachers had similar trouble talking about whether the language arts practices offer appropriate challenge for gifted students. One teacher stated this conundrum very well:

> That's a harder question....in reading it's not so sequential [as in math]. I don't know if I can say I can see an extension in reading beyond the fact in the responses there's such a vast difference as you've seen in their journals. [Like in] the ones that really get into their reading, such as Tim. [He] just loves to read...and you can see how personally involved he gets in what he writes in his journal. I guess the closest I can come to saying what the extension might be is that they write more fully and more thoughtfully in their journals.

> I would also say that the good readers, if they're in a book where they can go at their own speed, they'll end up going faster and they'll have time to read three books, when others read one.... Yet, I personally don't feel comfortable yet that I have a way to keep track of what those kids are doing during those three books. If I'm busy helping the one that is struggling through his one, how much can I really know about what's going on in the brains of the ones that are going through three? Except that the entries in their journals will tell me.

Students and teachers have a difficult time articulating what appropriate challenge and differentiated experience in language arts means to them, as can be seen from the above responses. But students (who had previously been in other than whole language programs) and teachers felt that what they are doing now is better than what they had done before in basal programs.

Although the questions addressed in this study were only partially answered, some important issues were raised. Perhaps this study will encourage others working as researchers in classrooms to document what happens to those students identified as gifted.

Finally, although whole language in these classrooms seems a step forward for language arts instruction for these gifted students, as well as the other students in these regular classrooms, its use does not preclude the need for gifted programming. The literature review shows that programming for the gifted must include self-selected, in-depth research projects that have as an outcome real products for real audiences. In none of the classrooms observed, were any students involved in such projects, although the fifth grade teacher provided time and opportunity for students to work on such a project. It seems unlikely that it would be possible, within the context of the classrooms observed, for the teachers to be able to involve their students in such full-fledged projects or to have the time to teach the skills necessary for students to complete such projects. With the help of a resource teacher for the gifted, however, students could very easily be involved.

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